CHRISTIAN SCIENCE.

A Brief Answer to the Question, "What is It?"

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CHRISTIAN SCIENCE.

A BRIEF ANSWER TO THE QUESTION, "WHAT IS IT?"

THIS name may seem to imply an incongruous association, because popular thought has long imagined religion and science to be engaged in a conflict with each other; but since whatever is true is also scientific when understood and its statements properly arranged, therefore Christianity, when correctly apprehended and stated, must be absolutely scientific, because it belongs to the highest domain of truth. This science is called Christian, because its first and perfect teacher was our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ; and because it is founded on an abiding faith in his promises and an understanding of the principles of the teaching of him, who, to Christian Scientists, is not only the Way and the Door to an understanding of the divine, but is also the Truth and the Life; one with the Father and in the Father, as the Father is in him. Nicodemus, asking Jesus about one of his declarations, said: "How can these things be?" Every one who has read the gospels has repeated the question, and Christian Science answers it with a statement of the philosophical basis on which rest the work and teaching of Jesus. Over and above all else, and in the deep, true meaning of the words, genuine Christian Science is an explana-

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tion which leads to an understanding of the Wisdom of Jesus Christ. It is science because it is a statement of self-evident principle and ascertained fact, upon which, by accurate reasoning, is built a superstructure, having, in the language of Sir William Hamilton, "in point of form the character of logical perfection, and in point of matter the character of real truth." Each branch of what is called natural science is a collection and classification of facts pertaining to some particular realm; but all truth, in whatever form, is of God, and whatever is not of Him is not truth; therefore, all science is of God and divine; but this is peculiarly Divine Science, because it deals exclusively with the truth of God in its most intimate relation to mankind.

The centre and circumference of Christian Science, that on which it all depends, its starting point and that to which it always returns, is the infinite and uncomprehended "I AM," who was from everlasting, and who is to everlasting; the one only and real individual, nameless and impossible to name; the Perfect and the All, without whom there is nothing, and through whom are all things; the Word, or Logos "without whom was not anything made," and "that which hath been made was life in Him," "and the life was the light of men"; the ONE, whom we call GOD. This is the axiomatic foundation of Christian Science — God is. The declaration of his existence is as absolute and essential a truth as any axiom in mathematics.

God Exists.

The first idea associated with Him is infinity. God is infinite. We speak of many infinities, but not all of them are absolutely infinite. We say there is an

infinite height, but it has an end where we stand. There is an infinite depth and that has a similar limitation. We may imagine the two joined, so that they make an unending infinite direction up and down; and yet the two together do not constitute absolute infinity, because they are bounded on all sides but two. We could imagine another similar direction by the side of the first and parallel to it; and to these we could add others, and never approach infinity. But this is not all, for we have imagined only one infinite direction, and from where we stand there radiate an infinite number of directions; and if to each of these we for ever add, as to our first one, parallel after parallel, we can never in any single case approach the infinity of these parallels. When to this, which we have attempted to connect with a single point, we add the thought that there are similar points on every side of our first one, with similarly radiating and parallel directions, and that the number of these points is itself infinite, we begin to see how utterly lacking in the quality of absolute infinity is the height with which we began, and which we call infinite. This illustration, imaginary and purely material, is presented only as a contrast to the unqualified and real infinity of God, the only infinite. The statement that He is infinite belongs to the same class of assertions as the statement that He exists. Whoever tries to look backward from the position in existence which we now occupy must come, sooner or later, to a cause which is beyond investigation, and which is itself the cause of all. In rebellion against religious forms of thought, some call it chance, others call it law, or inherent

God is Infinite.

principle, or force, and so on through a long catalogue of names. But every one who looks, whether he be wholly material or very largely spiritual, whether in the lowest deep of ignorance or standing on a pinnacle of knowledge, comes at last face to face with this unknown and uncomprehended first cause which we call God, and whom Jesus so emphatically called our Father. He is not always seen at the first glance, but whoever continues honestly to look must see Him. It is only he who does not look who fails to see, and then denies.

In the same sense that God is unknown, so is infinity; but as there are some things which we can and do know of immense magnitudes and distances, so there are also some things which may be surely predicted of the infinite. First, then, there can be but one absolutely infinite. As, in the idea of an infinite direction, because it is infinite in only one particular, there may be an infinite number of these infinite directions; so here, by contrast, is the absolutely infinite in every particular, which, therefore, does not admit of another. If another were admitted, neither would be infinite, because each must then be bounded on some side; but the absolutely infinite is boundless, therefore there cannot be two.

Only One Infinite.

From this there flows naturally and necessarily a second idea connected with an infinite God. If absolutely infinite, there can be no other; and consequently, just as absolutely and unqualifiedly as in the former proposition, God is all. Mankind are prone to talk and think loosely on limitless topics. They speak of infinity,

God is All.

and mean only that which is very large or which is infinite in some particular. Thus they say "God is all," without thinking of the comprehensiveness of the statement. Accurate thinking is absolutely necessary. Many who admit without hesitation that God is all, go on unwittingly, and without recognizing their own inconsistency, thinking of something else separate from Him, and not of Him. If there is only one, and that one is all, it is impossible that there should be two. Christian Scientists accept this proposition that God is all, in its unqualified form, because it is the unavoidable deduction from the first proposition that He is infinite, and also because they recognize that it is in harmony with His revealed word, as well as with all reason and logic.

From either of these two propositions arises a third: God is the one perfect individual. This reaches our comprehension a little more clearly because of our understanding of individuality; but God is infinite and all, and therefore not personal in the way in which we associate person with limitations and form. Though not personal, He is individual by reason of His infinity and allness; in His entirety unknowable and incomprehensible to the finite; and yet He is the one whom our great Teacher taught us is love.

From the first two propositions is derived also that absolute trinity admitted by all forms of Christianity, — His omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence. Unless He is both infinite and all, He can be neither of these three; because they not only are interdependable, but also are inseparable from absolutely infinite being. It is impossible to conceive of

infinity separated from either of them, and it is impossible to think of either one of them as apart from that which is all and infinite. When infinity ceases to be omnipotence, it is no longer infinite; and when omnipotence ceases to be infinite, it is no longer omnipotent. A similar statement is true of omnipresence and also of omniscience; and infinity is not infinite whenever it is not also omnipotence and omnipresence. When omniscience ceases to be all-science, it ceases to be infinite; and when God is no longer omniscient, He is not God. Herein is a mystery of infinity. Each of the three is absolutely infinite, yet neither interferes with the other, neither diminishes the other, nor is itself diminished by either of the others. The reason for all this, and its explanation, lies in the fact that, at the last analysis, they are all one and the same, — God. With the infinite height it is not so, but it is so concerning whatever we can truthfully say of God.

Materiality is incompatible with infinity. God cannot be infinite and material, because matter is subject to limitations, and is not itself infinite. With this, all revelation agrees; and everything which claims to be a religion, regardless of its designation, has a more or less definite recognition of the spirituality of its deity. Even in the grossest idolatry, the idol is recognized, though perhaps but dimly, as only the material representation of an invisible spirit. To deny this would shock the sensibility and reason of every intelligent worshipper in the world. Certainly no Christian could hold such an idea, and retain his belief in Christ. He taught a perfect spirituality for God, the Father, immeasurably higher and purer

than had ever been conceived by humanity; and even since he declared it, very many have failed to grasp and understand his thought in its fulness. God is Spirit. Neither can we worship Him through materiality; but, as Jesus said, "They that worship Him must worship in spirit and in truth."

God is Spirit.

Next in order is a statement entirely at variance with usual thought, contrary to most of the teaching of the ages, and contradictory to all the experiences and declarations of the senses. The statement that God is Spirit, combined with the preceding statements that He is both infinite and all, necessitates the conclusion that all is spirit; and if all is spirit, then the reverse statement is also true, and there is no matter. Hence, Christian Scientists hold that matter is not a reality, has no existence, and is less than an illusion.

Matter is not Real.

In many branches of natural science we are becoming accustomed to something like this denial of the testimony of the senses. An object seen through the water is not exactly where the eye says it is. The sky appears to be solid and impenetrable, but it is not. The stars look like glittering points, but they are worlds larger than ours. The earth appears to the senses flat, but it is a globe. Day and night and the changes of the seasons appear to the senses to be caused by motions of the sun while the earth stands still, but in fact they are caused by motions of the earth while the sun stands still. The declaration of the nonentity of matter is no greater shock to the senses now than were the declarations that the earth is globular and that it moves through space, in the

days when those propositions were first announced. Then, too, this declaration that matter is unreal is in exact accordance with a large and increasing school of material philosophers, usually acknowledging Berkeley as their pioneer. They reason from the qualities of matter and from the methods by which we acquire a knowledge of those qualities (*i. e.*, by the testimony of the senses, or through the sensations), and come to the conclusion that matter, as it manifests itself to our intelligence, has no existence. This is equivalent to a declaration that the senses are entirely untruthful. Piper says we neither see with our eyes, nor hear with our ears, but that the sensations we call seeing and hearing are independent of eyes and ears. That eminent American disciple of Spencer and Darwin, John Fiske, finally concludes there is nothing real about matter except force. That keen English logician, Clifford, declared, in exact harmony with Christian Science, that all is "mind-stuff." Another has well said that the direct tendency of the materialism of the time is to resolve all matter into points of force. The differences among these scholars are mostly in terms only, not in realities. It is remarkable that they should come up from the materialistic side of the subject, and through study of matter alone, arrive at the same conclusion which Christian Science reaches through consideration of spirit. That must be a very safe conclusion which is reached, as in this case, by two independent and diverse courses of reasoning. This is a case in which all roads, wherever they start from, lead the traveller to Rome, if he only follows the road.

Philosophers and scholars examined materiality until they were convinced of its nothingness, but their speculations and conclusions remained only speculations and conclusions without any practical application. Christian Science arrived at the same speculative results by an entirely different and independent course of reasoning, and from that position pointed out not only the harmony of these conclusions with the teaching and work of Jesus Christ, but also showed that they furnish a philosophical explanation of all that he said and did, thus proving that his teaching is scientific in the exact meaning of the word, and demonstrating the practical application of his principles in the healing of disease. These last and greatest triumphs of Christian Science were never hinted at nor even dreamed of by the most enthusiastic philosophers and scholars among them all, but on the contrary many of them emphatically repudiated Jesus Christ and all his teachings.

There is a wide distinction between pantheism and Christian Science. The pantheist makes god of the visible material world about us. The Christian Scientist denies the reality of matter, and recognizes only infinite Spirit as God. The god of the pantheist has no existence to the Christian Scientist, and the pantheist has not yet recognized the God of Christian Science.

The great Teacher showed all through his life and his works that good hath no fellowship with evil, and that the same object cannot combine both qualities. He also taught by almost every possible method the absolute goodness of God. God is good. He is not part good and part bad; but all good. Then God,

being good, does not either directly or indirec
produce evil; and since there is no other creat
("He made all that was made"), then e
was not created, and if not created, it do
not exist. There is other and equally log
cal proof. God is all, and God is good: then all th
is must be good; but evil is not good: therefo
since all that is must be good, then evil is not — has
existence. This declaration of the unreality or no
existence of evil is the only logical solution of t
inconsistency involved in the recognition of its e
istence and the claim that God is both good a
omnipotent. If He is unqualifiedly good, and if e
also exists, then he cannot possibly have the pow
to destroy it, because His goodness would comp
Him to do so if he were able. On the other hand,
He is omnipotence, and does not destroy it, He ca
not be unqualifiedly good; and if He is omniscien
and omnipotence as well as wholly good, then H
could not have permitted it to exist in the first plac
If evil really exists, there is no alternative but to de
the goodness of God, or else to deny that he is
knowledge and all power. Yet if we deprive Him
either or any part of these qualities, He is no long
God, because no longer infinite. If He is part
good and partly bad He is not perfect and cons
quently is not God. Besides, in that case, He wou
be a kingdom divided against itself which cann
stand; but God abideth forever. There is no oth
solution of the problem. Either we must deny th
infinity, the Godship, of God, and thereby save evi
or else we must deny the reality of evil and save Go
Many good and wise men who thought evil real hav

Evil is not Real.

struggled with this problem, and finally silenced their reason with sophistry; or else they have turned their backs upon the question as an insoluble mystery, and have striven to forget it in God's love. Others, believing evil, and loving it more than God, have made the apparent existence of evil an excuse for denying God, believing a lie to their own condemnation. St. Paul well said, "Yea, let God be true, but every man a liar"; or, as Wilson renders the declaration: "Let God be true though every man be false." Christian Science maintains the same position, denies the existence of evil, and declares that God is true and good, that He is omniscience, omnipotence, and omnipresence; that God is God.

Revelation says that God made man in His own image and likeness, or similitude, and Christian Science takes this to be as nearly accurate as the statement can be made in words addressed to the human understanding. Some reverse this language, and base their conclusions concerning God upon what they think they see in man; but Christian Scientists reason from the known of God concerning the real in man. We are taught by revelation and reason that God is incorporeal and immaterial; therefore, man, His image, must be so, too. Consequently, this apparently corporeal and material in man must be unreal. God is spirit; and, therefore, as man was created in his similitude, man must be spiritual. This is in exact accord with the preceding declaration that matter does not exist. Although it sweeps away the sensuous and mortal of humanity, yet nothing is lost, because it leaves all that is real and eternal. What appears to

Man is Spiritual.

be lost is only that which many forms of modern thought teach is a clog and a hindrance to man's development on the true lines of progress, that which must be cast off in order to attain to perfection, and which is lost only through death. The Christian Scientist, working on precisely the same line, but ahead of his brother, says that this mortal and material part is now utterly unreal and non-existent, and that in just so far as we can understand and realize its unreality, do we advance even here in this phase of our life, toward that perfect freedom and happiness which others look for only beyond the grave.

In illustration of this relationship of man to God, the Christian Scientist likens man to a reflection of God, as a rose may be reflected in a mirror; and as, with properly arranged mirrors, we may have a vast number of reflections of a single rose, each reflection varying in some degree from every other, so mankind is a reflection of the infinite God. As, in the comparison, the rose is but one with many reflections, so God is but one, and man, individually and collectively, is His reflection. Another illustration of this relationship may be expressed by saying that man is God's idea. Herein is an elucidation of the statement that God is all, though man seems to exist separate from Him. The thinker's idea is a part of himself. He expresses his idea, and it remains a part of himself just as much as before, yet it has gone out from himself, and has an independent existence by itself in the minds of others. Nevertheless, it is recognized by them as of the thinker, though at the same time separate from

Man is God's Idea.

him through his expression of it; and with all this there is One, and that One is the Thinker. Jesus told Nicodemus that "no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven"; and very frequently Jesus Christ claimed to be one with the Father, in the Father, and the Father in Him. On the material basis all this is impossible; but considering man as an immaterial thought of God, it is both possible and clear. Any illustration is, however, only illustrative and fragmentary, and cannot be a statement of the exact fact, much less of the whole fact. Infinity cannot be illustrated with the finite. These things are beyond the material understanding, and can be comprehended only as men come into recognition of the spiritual. A perfect knowledge of truth can come only from the full recognition of perfect spirituality, and with that will be lost the recognition of materiality. There is a vast difference between an intellectual acceptance of a declaration as true, and a spiritual realization of the same truth.

Here we arrive at another position of Christian Science, based on the former proposition that there is no matter, but that all is mind or spirit. Then all true healing must be through mind, or spirit healing. That was the way Jesus healed. He spoke the word, and it was done. Spirit accomplished it all. He neither used nor recommended the use of drugs, or any material supposed to possess curative properties. Nor did he ever claim that the power thus manifested was limited to himself; but he declared that it is for all believers, without limitation of time or place.

The Word which created all, when properly under-

stood, is sufficient for all, and God is no respector of persons. He has no favorites. Every time Jesus sent out his disciples, he commanded them both to heal the sick and to preach the gospel. He himself did both as his example for his followers; and he expressly and repeatedly declared in many varying phrases, notably at the last supper: "He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also"; and at the interview that was terminated by his ascension, he said, "These signs (healing, etc.) shall follow them that believe." These examples, commands, and declarations are not in any case restricted to his immediate disciples, nor to his hearers, nor to that age, but are to all them that believe. Believing is the only restriction of the promise, and he asked every one to believe. Christian Science sets forth the reasons for the things Jesus did and taught, and thus aids the understanding and helps man to believe. His gospel was indeed to be salvation from sin, and his freedom was to be freedom from sin; but both were to be complete. "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." We are taught throughout revelation that sickness and death are results of error, and his salvation and freedom could not be complete unless it saves and frees man from all, not only from sin but from every error and therefore also from every result of error and sin. His salvation is to the uttermost, unto all that come unto him, so that even the last enemy, death, shall be destroyed. Notice, too, that the promise is not that death shall destroy all, and through triumph, have no more to do; but it is that death itself shall be destroyed. If the destruction of death were a

part of his work, then surely to overcome sickness which leads to death was a part of his work, and it therefore must be also a part of the work of those who believe on him.

His healing first attracted attention to Jesus, and gave him an audience for his teaching; and healing does the same for Christian Science. Great importance is usually given to it; but to heal was not the only command of the Master, and joy in the relief of suffering is only one of the many blessings bestowed by belief in him. Those who have been the instruments of healing by the application of Truth understand that it amounts to a demonstration of the divine Principle, just as the astronomer and geometrician know that the truth of their propositions is demonstrated by their own practical application of them. But it is claimed that Christian Science does not cure all. Neither did the immediate disciples of Jesus in his own day and presence; and he told them it was because of their lack of faith. So it is to-day. As the understanding is enlarged, and as that faith comes which follows understanding, then will healing by Christian Scientists be more universal, and the two will go hand in hand, each increasing the other, until the prediction of the destruction of death shall be fulfilled.

There are essential differences between Christian Science and either faith cure or mind cure, but it is not within the scope of this essay to explain them. It is not unusual to class all three together as one, nor is it unusual for either of the others to claim the first name, but no Christian Scientist ever claimed either of the other names. The differences between Christian Science and theosophy, mysticism, or oc-

cultism, are yet greater; and to all forms of mesmerism, animal magnetism, and spiritualism, it is diametrically and unalterably opposed, because each of them is contrary to its Principle. Neither are all those who claim the name worthy of it. There are pretenders to all forms of truth.

The foregoing is a brief statement of the fundamental, or basic, declarations of Christian Science; but let not the one who, in this essay, reads for the first time concerning the subject think that the whole is here included. It is the science of life and of living. Unending existence, filled full of continual recognitions of divine truth, will not exhaust the fountain nor compass the whole. Yet it is all embraced in the two declarations: "God is," and "God is infinite."

This is the fundamental principle. On this basis Jesus Christ stands with all his teaching. Let him who understands build thereon. By this criterion let him try everything which he puts into his structure, rejecting all that is not in exact agreement with it. Doing this he will go forward with confidence of success towards a comprehension of the subject and a solution of each of life's problems, always finding food for thought and always recognizing more and more of truth.

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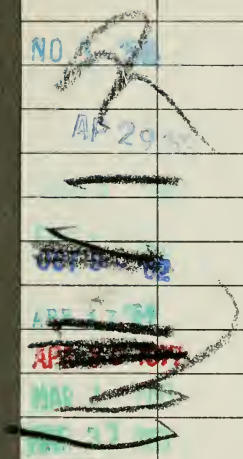

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